

Following several exhibitions at the Galerie Gisèle Linder which have focused on her painting, the current presentation marks Luo Mingjun's return to the medium of drawing. Although she has made drawings for a number of years with pen and ink or pencil, it is only recently that the artist has started to use charcoal to produce works on this larger scale, many of the drawings measuring 100 x 70 cm. Considerably quicker to use, charcoal gives her not only a creative energy but also more freedom than other materials since she can use her hand to alter the texture of the medium or partially erase it.

Luo Mingjun's exploration of this new medium also reflects the changes in her approach to making art, in particular her tendency to follow her instincts more readily than in the past. In comparison with her earlier ink or pencil drawings which were highly controlled and precise interpretations of family portraits or everyday objects, these new works are more expressive and vigorous. All the images are based on situations that the artist has seen and experienced herself and has chosen to capture in photographs. Some, like the bird sitting in a tree, although tenderly depicted, are impersonal. However, *En scène*, the title of the exhibition, underlines Luo Mingjun's view of herself as playing a role, of the autobiographical as a stage on which to project her past and present selves. This is perhaps most evident in the long drawing of her class at art school or the portrait of the artist's family, with Mao added in the centre. It extends, however, to the exploration of new choices of both subject matter and their treatment.

A key aspect of Luo Mingjun's use of charcoal is her treatment of light. The rich, dense blackness of the medium creates a variety of qualities of light, from the almost mystical burnishing of the sky that draws the attention of a group of figures depicted from behind, to the single bright lightbulb. The loneliness of a woman standing at a lecturn is enhanced by the soft glow of light that renders her oddly insubstantial, while the shadow behind the bottle marked with the words *BorderLine Suisse* emphasises the scale of the single object in the large empty space. In a further drawing, in a play of positive and negative, a group of figures is so densely clustered that their black forms against the neutral background recall the silhouettes of cut-outs.

There is a simplicity to these new works that exudes a sense of calm and peace. As a contrast to the charcoal drawings, a delicate blue-grey watercolour, composed of nine sheets, depicts the same Chinese family that recurs several times throughout the exhibition. With the minimum of brushstrokes, the outline of the figures is indicated just enough for the image to be read. Drawings of an olive tree, branches in snow or the stark forms of antenna against clouds are characterised by both simplicity and a clear perspective.

This new pared down quality is shared by the small number of oil paintings in the exhibition. In these, Luo Mingjun has used almost neutral shades of grey-white on each unprimed, beige-green canvas to intimate variously the sea, a small, dark tree depicted in negative, and a large painting of a flowering magnolia tree at dusk. These works, too, are mere impressions of their subject matter, as though hovering fleetingly on the surface of the canvas. The artist's skill in dissolving her realistic subject matter whilst simultaneously reinventing it as a proposition in paint has developed over many years. In this exhibition, *En scène*, Luo Mingjun applies this to the autobiographical and the freedom she can draw from this to imagine, play and dream.